

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-02 MCT-01 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02
CU-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
/073 W
-----132113Z 053787 /64

P R 131935Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2335
INFO PANCANAL
USCINCSO

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, PN, PQ
SUBJECT: SHALER TRIANGLE DEMONSTRATION

REF: PANAMA 4070

1. LOCAL PRESS PLAY FOLLOWING JUNE 6 DEMONSTRATIONS WAS FAIRLY WIDESPREAD, BUT NOT EXCESSIVE. PAPERS FOR JUNE 7 ALL CARRIED ARTICLES--GENERALLY FAIRLY FACTUAL EXCEPT FOR USUAL WIDELY VARYING ESTIMATES OF CROWD SIZES--AND MOST INCLUDED PICTURES OF U.S. FLAG BEING PULLED DOWN AT SHALER TRIANGLE.

2. "STAR AND HERALD" FOR JUNE 8 CARRIED AP ARTICLE ON DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT ABOUT DEMONSTRATION, EXPRESSING GRATIFICATION THAT FLAG HAD BEEN RETURNED TO U.S. AUTHORITIES. "ESTRELLA" CARRIED SAME ITEM AS A PART OF A LONGER CONGLOMERATE STORY ABOUT TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. REMAINING PAPERS HAVE NOT CARRIED IT, ALTHOUGH LOCAL TV NEWS BROADCAST SAID STATE DEPARTMENT "PULLED DOWN THE IMPORTANCE" OF THE

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INCIDENT; "IT PRAISED THE PANAMANIAN AUTHORITIES INSTEAD OF CRITICIZING THE DEMONSTRATING STUDENTS."
(FBIS/PANAMA PA 081844Y.)

3. ON JUNE 8, EMBASSY RECEIVED LETTER FROM GOVERNOR PARFITT DESCRIBING INCIDENTS IN DETAIL AND REQUESTING DIPLOMATIC PROTEST BE LODGED WITH GOP (COPY POUCHED

ARA/PAN). FACT THAT PROTEST HAD BEEN RECOMMENDED WAS INCLUDED IN A FRONT-PAGE ITEM DESCRIBING THE PROTESTS THAT APPEARED IN PANCANAL'S WEEKLY HOUSE ORGAN "SPILLWAY" FOR FRIDAY, JUNE 10 (COPY POUCHED ARA/PAN).

4. AFTERNOON OF JUNE 8, GOVERNOR PARFITT STRESSED TO CHARGE AND CINC THAT PSYCHOLOGICAL TEMPER SURROUNDING SUCH INCIDENTS ON BOTH SIDES OF BOUNDARY WAS GROWING CRITICAL, AND STRONGLY URGING THAT A PROTEST BE MADE.

5. AS REQUESTED BY GOVERNOR, AND CONFIRMED BY TELECONS WITH DEPARTMENT AND AMBASSADOR JORDEN, EMBASSY TRANSMITTED THE FOLLOWING NOTE OF PROTEST TO FOREIGN MINISTRY ON JUNE 13, 1977: BEGIN QUOTE: THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA PRESENTS ITS COMPLIMENTS TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA AND HAS THE HONOR TO REFER TO CERTAIN EVENTS WHICH OCCURRED IN THE CANAL ZONE ON MONDAY, JUNE 6, 1977.

AT APPROXIMATELY 9:00 A.M. ON THAT MORNING, A LARGE GROUP OF PANAMANIAN STUDENTS MOVED INTO THE SHALER TRIANGLE AREA OF THE CANAL ZONE. THERE THEY MADE SPEECHES, PAINTED SLOGANS ON WALLS IN THE AREA, AND REMOVED THE UNITED STATES FLAG FROM ITS POLE, REPLACING IT WITH A PANAMANIAN FLAG. BY LONGSTANDING CUSTOM, BOTH UNITED STATES AND PANAMANIAN FLAGS WERE BEING FLOWN AT THAT LOCATION. THE UNITED STATES FLAG WAS LATER RETURNED TO UNITED STATES AUTHORITIES IN THE CANAL ZONE IN A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SEVERELY TORN AND DAMAGED CONDITION. AT APPROXIMATELY 10:00 A.M., A GROUP OF PANAMANIAN STUDENTS GATHERED IN THE VICINITY OF THE ANCON LAUNDRY IN THE CANAL ZONE WHERE THEY REMAINED AND MADE SPEECHES BEFORE DEPARTING. AT APPROXIMATELY 9:50 A.M. THE SAME MORNING, ANOTHER GROUP OF PANAMANIAN STUDENTS ENTERED THE CRISTOBAL AREA OF THE CANAL ZONE, WHERE THEY DELAYED THE SCHEDULED DEPARTURE OF A PANAMA RAILROAD TRAIN FOR PANAMA CITY AND PAINTED SLOGANS ON THE ENGINE AND SEVERAL PASSENGER CARS. IN EACH OF THESE CASES, THE STUDENTS MADE SPEECHES CONTAINING INTEMPERATE REFERENCES TO THE UNITED STATES, WHICH WERE PARTICULARLY INAPPROPRIATE AT THIS TIME AS NEGOTIATIONS ARE PROCEEDING BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND PANAMA TO CONCLUDE A NEW TREATY WHICH WILL ELIMINATE THE CAUSES OF CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. IN EACH CASE, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PANAMANIAN

NATIONAL GUARD FAILED TO INTERVENE EFFECTIVELY
TO PREVENT THE DEMONSTRATORS FROM MAKING INCURSIONS
INTO THE CANAL ZONE, FROM WANTONLY DEFACING WALLS
AND RAILROAD CARS AND SHOWING DISRESPECT FOR THE
FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES.

THE EMBASSY MUST OBSERVE TO THE MINISTRY THAT
SUCH CONDUCT, IN AN EMOTIONAL SITUATION AS NOW
EXISTS, WHEN NOT PROPERLY CONTROLLED BY THE AUTHORITIES
OF THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA, CARRIES WITH IT A SERIOUS
RISK OF FURTHER EXCESSES WHICH COULD ONLY BE
DETRIMENTAL TO THE INTERESTS OF BOTH COUNTRIES
AND PEOPLES AND TO THE TRADITIONALLY FRIENDLY
RELATIONS BETWEEN THEM.

THE EMBASSY IS SERIOUSLY CONCERNED OVER THE POSSIBILITY
THAT SUCH UNFORTUNATE DEVELOPMENTS MIGHT OCCUR AND
PROTESTS THE LACK OF TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE ACTION BY THE
AUTHORITIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA TO PREVENT THE
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EVENTS OF JUNE 6, 1977. THE EMBASSY ANTICIPATES
THE ASSISTANCE OF PANAMANIAN AUTHORITIES IN PREVENTING
SUCH SITUATION IN THE FUTURE.

THE EMBASSY RENEWS TO THE MINISTRY THE ASSURANCES
OF ITS HIGHEST CONSIDERATION. END QUOTE.

GONZALEZ

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Message Attributes

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